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Published in:
Proceedings of the 18th European Solid-State Circuits Conference

Publication date:
1992

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):
Kaulberg, T. (1992). CMOS Current-mode Operational Amplifier. In *Proceedings of the 18th European Solid-State Circuits Conference* (pp. 246-249). IEEE.

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CMOS Current-mode Operational Amplifier

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Abstract — A fully differential-input differential-output current-mode operational amplifier (COA) is described. The amplifier utilizes three second generation current-conveyors (CCII) as the basic building blocks. It can be configured to provide either a constant gain-bandwidth product in a fully balanced current-mode feedback amplifier or a constant bandwidth in a transimpedance feedback amplifier. The amplifier is found to have a gain bandwidth product of 8 MHz, an offset current of $0.8 \mu\text{A}$ (signal-range $\pm 700 \mu\text{A}$) and a (theoretically) unlimited slew-rate. The amplifier is realized in a standard CMOS $2.4 \mu\text{m}$ process.

I INTRODUCTION

A current mode equivalent to the conventional voltage mode operational amplifier is a current mode operational amplifier (COA), i.e. a current amplifier with a current mode low impedance

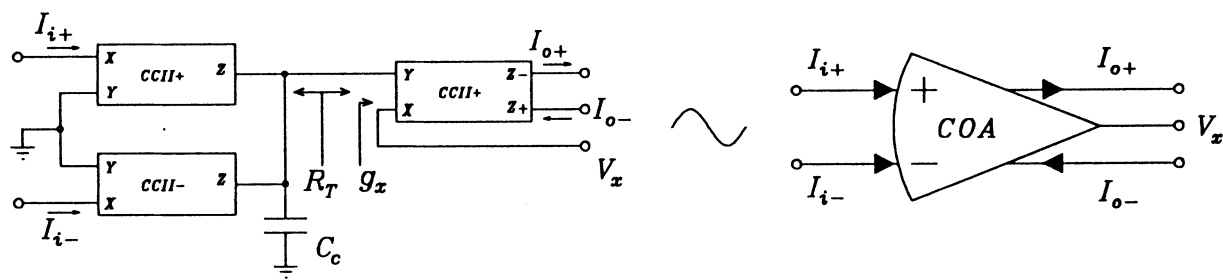


Figure 1: A current-mode op-amp

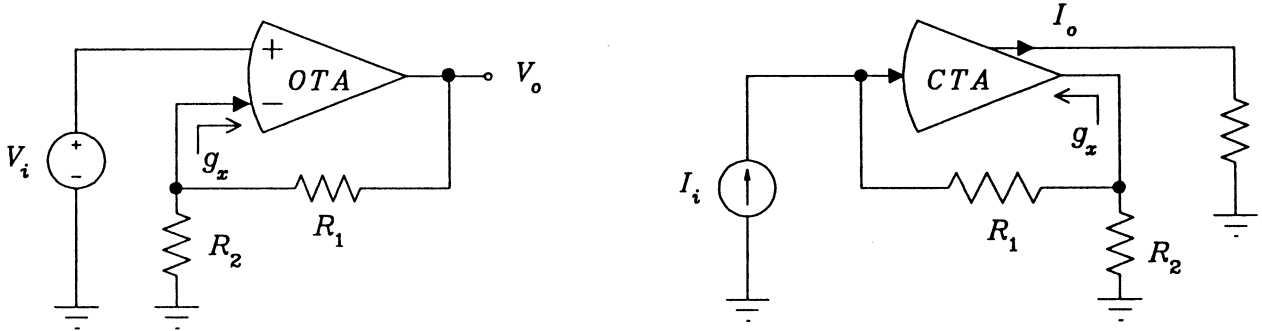


Figure 2: a: Voltage transimpedance amplifier. b: Current transimpedance amplifier (CTA)

input¹, a differential current mode high impedance output, and a high (ideally infinite) current gain.

Most current amplifiers described in the literature have only a limited gain. However, the structure described in the present paper is suitable for true COA operations, i.e. a current gain in the order of 80 dB.

The amplifier is based on the interconnection of second generation current conveyors [1]. Due to a flexible interconnection structure of the conveyors both a fully differential current mode opamp [2] and a current mode transimpedance opamp [3] can be configured from the present structure. Fig. 1 shows an equivalent diagram of the COA expressed in terms of second generation current conveyors. With the V_X -terminal connected to ground the circuit is inter-reciprocal to a conventional balanced voltage-mode operational amplifier. According to the theory of *Adjoint Networks* [1], it has a current transfer-function equal to the voltage transfer-function of the voltage-mode operational amplifier. The transfer-function is derived from Fig. 1 :

$$\frac{I_o(s)}{I_i(s)} = \frac{g_x R_T}{1 + s R_T C_c} \Rightarrow GBW = \frac{g_x}{C_c} \quad (1)$$

With the V_X -terminal used as a feedback-terminal (Fig. 2b²) the amplifier can be shown inter-reciprocal to a voltage domain transimpedance amplifier [3] shown in Fig. 2a [5]. In this configuration the amplifier therefore exhibits a nearly gain-independent bandwidth. The transfer-function is calculated from : $I_o = g_x(Z_T I_i + V_X)$ where $Z_T = R_T \parallel \frac{1}{sC_c}$ and $I_i = I_{i+} - I_{i-}$ and is the same for both circuits :

$$H(s) = \left. \frac{V_o(s)}{V_i(s)} \right|_{\text{Fig. 2a}} = \left. \frac{I_o(s)}{I_i(s)} \right|_{\text{Fig. 2b}} = \left(1 + \frac{R_1}{R_2} \right) \frac{1}{1 + s R_1 C_c} \quad (2)$$

where it is assumed that $g_x[R_1 \parallel R_2] \gg 1$. Because the available current to charge and discharge C_c is not limited to a quiescent value of current (bias current source) but only limited by the current signal range of the input current conveyors, the amplifier does not suffer from slew rate limitation like the voltage mode opamp.

¹ A differential current input is necessary if the amplifier has to be inter-reciprocal with a conventional balanced voltage mode opamp

² In Fig. 2b. the COA has been inserted with the I_{i-} -terminal left open and the I_{o-} -terminal grounded

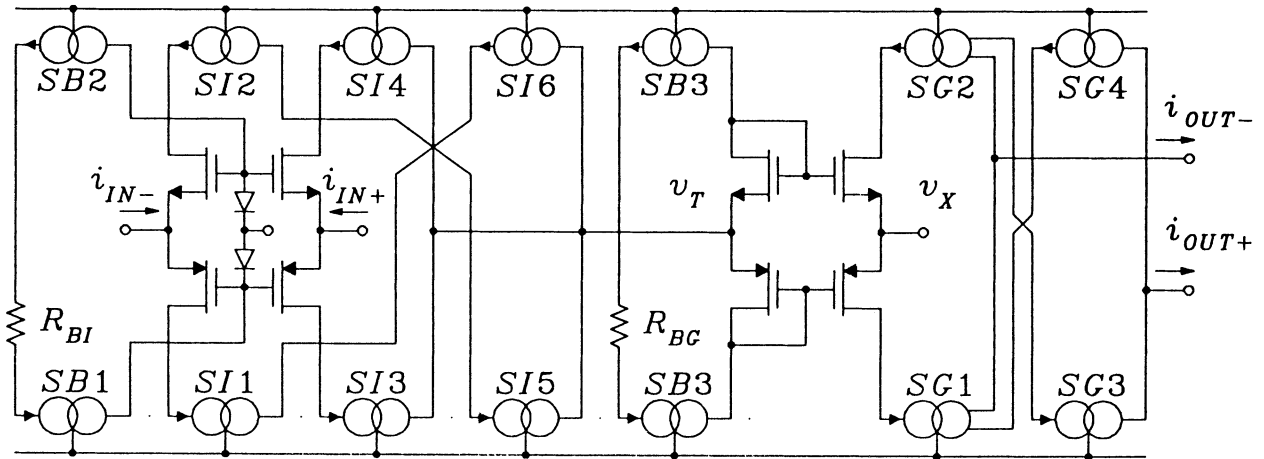


Figure 3: A CMOS current-mode op-amp

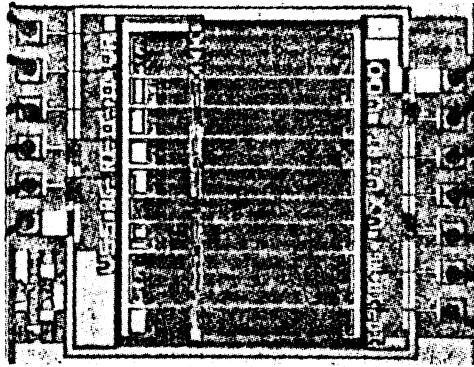


Figure 4: Die Photo of the current-mode operational amplifier

II REALIZATION

The current-mode op-amp has been realized as shown in the diagram of Fig. 3. The circuit is characterized by Eq. (3) and (4).

$$g_x = \frac{1}{g_{m6} + g_{mbs6} + g_{m8} + g_{mbs8}} \quad (3)$$

$$R_T = \frac{1}{g_{o2} + g_{o4} + g_{o5} + g_{o6} + g_{oi5} + g_{oi7}} \quad (4)$$

where g_{on} represent the output-conductance of current-mirrors or current-sources denoted by CMn and I_{Bn} . The input current offset errors are strongly dependent on the accuracy of the current-mirrors [2], and therefore all current-mirrors (and current-sources) have been realized as cascode current-mirrors. Each transistor in the amplifier needs to match one or two other transistors and in order to improve the matching a finger-structure common centroid layout technique has been used for all transistors.

